



Connecticut Chapter

International Association of Arson Investigators

February 18, 2022

Connecticut General Assembly
Public Safety and Security Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3600
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Non-support for SB 132 “An Act Concerning the Sale and Use of Consumer Grade Fireworks”

Dear Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee,

The International Association of Arson Investigators, Connecticut Chapter (IAAI-CT Chapter), does not support raised bill SB 132, An Act Concerning the Sale and Use of Consumer Grade Fireworks.

Since 2001, when the sale and use of “Sparklers and Fountains” became an exemption to the law prohibiting fireworks in Connecticut, the number of personal injuries and incidents of structure fires has risen in the state.

Each year, Connecticut firefighters respond to dozens of fires attributed to the use of consumer fireworks causing hundreds of thousands of dollars of property damage and putting the lives of innocent residents and emergency personnel who respond to extinguish those fires at risk. Since 2015, more than 85 structure fires have been attributed to the use of consumer fireworks in Connecticut.

Each year, emergency rooms across Connecticut treat burn and traumatic injuries resulting from the use of consumer fireworks. Since 2015, at least 29 personal injuries were attributed to the use of consumer fireworks in Connecticut, including in 2016 when a 28-year-old man who was attending a party where consumer fireworks were being illegally used sustained a traumatic injury that resulted in the amputation of his lower arm. In July 2018 a 24-year-old man from Wolcott traveled to New Hampshire and purchased illegal fireworks which he set off at a private party in Meriden. He sustained serious injuries that required hospitalization and debilitating injuries when one of the fireworks exploded in close proximity to his chest and face.

In 2007 and 2014, consumer fireworks related structure fires resulted in two fatalities; an 18-month-old toddler in Meriden and a 19-year-old young woman in Southington who were sleeping in their beds. Consumer fireworks contain explosive powders, chemicals and materials that can be used to make improvised explosive devices. In 2013, the Boston Marathon bombers purchased Consumer fireworks in New Hampshire and cut them apart and harvested the powders to craft the pressure cooker bombs that killed 2 and injured hundreds on Boylston Street. In

January 2018, 2 brothers in the Bronx were arrested making a bomb made from dismantled consumer fireworks that they were plotting to use in a school.

In January 2019, the Plainfield Police Department received numerous calls to 911 and more to the regular police department line for more than an hour with reports of gunshots and explosions in 6 different areas of town. Officers who were in the Wauregan area when calls reporting “loud bangs” came in saw a vehicle parked at the Gulf gas station at Route 205 and Route 12 that matched the description witnesses gave and police said they found people in the vehicle with several high-powered fireworks, which are considered to be explosives. Incidents such as these create public fear in a society where gun control is of utmost concern and the inherent risks of explosives are all too real.

In May, 2020, a Litchfield man injured his 7-year-old daughter while shooting off illegal fireworks in his back yard, causing a facial injury that required treatment at a local hospital, after an errant firework bounced off a shed roof and struck her face.

Consumer fireworks are designed to go aerial, explode and can travel and land on another person’s property causing property damage. This bill would provide easy access to consumer fireworks that are not only a nuisance, but are dangerous for those who use them and innocent bystanders who can be inadvertently injured because of the nature of the way in which they function. From a public safety perspective, the inherent dangers of using fireworks are great and their use should not be left to the general public. Fireworks use should be left to the professionals who are trained, licensed and regulated to use them safely so as to not endanger the lives and property of the citizens of Connecticut.

Respectfully,

Keith Flood

Keith Flood
President, CT Chapter IAAI